

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 62/16/00

UA 206/00

12 July 2000

Fear of i

UZBEKISTAN Oybek Ruzmetov, 35 (_____)
Uygun Ruzmetov, 30 (_____)
Sardor Allayarov, 28 (_____)
Utkir Yusupov, 26 (_____)

Death in custody: Shikhnozor Yakubov, 25 (_____)

Four of the five men named above face imminent execution, after the Supreme Court rejected appeals against their death sentences. At least two of them allegedly confessed under torture, and one has died in prison, reportedly beaten to death. Their only hope now is clemency from President Islam Karimov.

The five were sentenced to death by Tashkent Regional Court in July 1999, convicted of planning to blow up a water reservoir, attempting to overthrow the constitutional order to set up an Islamic state, organizing illegal armed groups, premeditated, aggravated murder, and robbery. Three others received 18-, 19- and 20-year prison sentences.

According to their mother, Oybek and Uygun Ruzmetov were arrested in December 1998 after police searched their house, in the town of Urgench in western Uzbekistan, and planted cartridges in Oybek Ruzmetov's room. He was later accused of being the head of an illegal group. The two brothers were held at the Urgench National Security Services. In February 1999 police arrested the men's parents and humiliated them by forcing them to undress and taking them handcuffed and in their underwear to see their sons. Oybek and Uygun Ruzmetov told their parents that they had been tortured, and that the police had threatened to arrest their parents and rape Uygun Ruzmetov's wife unless they confessed.

Shikhnozor Yakubov reportedly died as a result of beatings in prison in October 1999. No investigation into these allegations is known to have taken place.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has learned of at least 55 death sentences and 15 executions in Uzbekistan in the past 18 months. However, as information on the death penalty is regarded as a state secret, the real figures may be much higher.

Most of these sentences have been handed down since a series of bomb explosions in the capital, Tashkent, in February 1999. The government claims these were attempts by Islamic extremists to assassinate President Islam Karimov. Hundreds of supposed conspirators, including members of independent Islamic congregations, members and supporters of the banned political opposition parties and movements and their families were arrested. President Karimov reportedly told journalists in April 1999: "I am prepared to rip off the heads of 200 people, to sacrifice their lives, in order to save peace and calm in the republic."

Amnesty International has received a steady stream of allegations that many of those arrested are tortured by police, and that many of those accused of "religious extremism" had weapons and narcotics planted on them.

Uzbekistan is following "a policy of abolishing the death penalty by stages", according to assurances given to Amnesty International in 1998 by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights in Uzbekistan, Sayora Rashidova. However, although the death sentences passed on two young musicians were reversed in March this year, which seemed to be an encouraging step forward, this remains an isolated case.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/e-mails/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian or your own language:

- urging the President to use his constitutional authority to commute the death sentences passed on Oybek Ruzmetov, Uygun Ruzmetov, Sardor Allayarov, and Utkir Yusupov, as well as all other death sentences that come before him;
- urging the authorities to press ahead with their "policy to abolish the death penalty by stages" and impose a moratorium on death sentences and executions pending a comprehensive review of the death penalty, in line with the international trend towards abolition of the death penalty;
- expressing concern at allegations that Oybek and Uygun Ruzmetov were tortured and their confessions extracted under duress, and that Shikhnozov Yakubov died of beatings in prison, and urging the authorities to instigate a prompt and impartial investigation into these allegations with the results made public;
- expressing sympathy for the victims of crime and their families, but pointing out that the death penalty has never been shown to deter crime more effectively than other punishments, and is brutalizing to all those involved in its application.

APPEALS TO (Please note that fax numbers are difficult to obtain. If a voice answers, repeat 'fax' until connected; otherwise it is advisable to leave your fax machine on auto-redial):

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700163 g. Tashkent; ul. Uzbekistanskaya, 43; Rezidentsia prezidenta; Prezidentu Respubliki Uzbekistan; KARIMOVU I.A.
UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Prezidentu Karimovu, 700163 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Faxes: + 998 71 139 53 15 / 139 53 25

e-mails: uzinfo@uzinfo.gov.uz

Salutation: Dear President Karimov

Head of the Clemency Department at the President's Office

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700000 g. Tashkent; Apparat Prezidenta Respubliki Uzbekistan; Otdel po voprosam pomilovaniya; Zaveduyushchemu otdelom AKHMANOVU N.; UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Akhmanovu N., Otdel pomilovaniya, 700000 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Salutation: Dear Mr Akhmanov

Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700183 g. Tashkent; ul. Abdulla Kodiri, 1; Verkhovny Sud Respubliki Uzbekistan; Predsedatelyu MINGBAYEVU U.; UZBEKISTAN

Telegrams: Mingbayevu U., Verkhovny sud, 700183 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Salutation: Dear Mr. Mingbayev

COPIES TO:

Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights

Respublika Uzbekistan; 700035 g. Tashkent; Oliy Majlis Respubliki Uzbekistan; Upolnomochennoy po pravam cheloveka pri Oliy Majlis; RASHIDOVOY S.; UZBEKISTAN

Faxes: + 998 71 139 85 55

E-mails: mtillaboev@oliymajlis.gov.uz

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Respublika Uzbekistan; 700029 g. Tashkent; pl. Mustakillik, 5; Ministerstvo
inostrannykh del Respubliki Uzbekistan; Ministru KOMILOVU A.Kh.; UZBEKISTAN
Faxes: + 998 71 139 15 17

and to diplomatic representatives of Uzbekistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 August 2000.